

the Brahmaputra River in the Passighat Division, Sadya Frontier, Assam.

BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,

6, APOLLO STREET, BOMBAY.

S. H. PRATER.

March 15, 1936.

XX.—DEATH OF SURVEY KHALASSI DUE TO POISONING BY A COMMON KRAIT (*BUNGARUS CAERULEUS*).

Capt. H. W. Wright, R.E., has sent the following report on the death of a Survey Khalassi from Krait poisoning. The snake responsible for the fatality was submitted for identification by the Director, Geodesic Branch Survey of India. It has been identified as a Common Krait (*Bungarus caeruleus*).

'Khalassi Nandan Singh who was working in Surveyor Kundan Singh's squad died on 20th November 1935 morning at Chaman village (Jaisalmer) in map sheet 45A.

He was sleeping on the ground when at about 2-30 a.m. he found something crawling over his legs. He woke up other khalassis in the tent who found nearby a black snake with white rings, being 1 in. in girth and 1½ ft. long, which they killed.

After an hour, Nandan Singh complained of a burning sensation in his mouth at which the Surveyor thought that the snake had bitten him. But no mark of the bite was found anywhere and neither did the deceased complain of any burning sensation over any other part of his body.

The surveyor then called the villagers to find out whether they could cure him with country-medicines, but they told him that such a snake's poison was incurable.

Within half an hour the victim died.

On receipt of the information, a Survey Officer, who was camping about four miles way from Chaman, went to look at the deceased after about six hours, by which time the body had become cold and stiff. The Officer could not discover any snake-bite mark on the body.

The local people say that it is a very poisonous snake which never bites and which after inhaling the breath that comes out through the mouth of persons who sleep with mouths open at night drops some of its poison into that person's mouth; result being instantaneous death without any remedy. Other villagers also confirm this story with many similar instances of death.¹

EDITORS.

¹ That Kraits and Phooras poison people when asleep in the ingenious manner described above or even by merely breathing upon them is a belief prevalent in many parts of India. It is a belief akin to that of the Mythical 'Bis-Cobra' which is supposed to kill a man by casting its shadow over him!—Eds.